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ABSTRACT

Students who withdrew from the State University of New York at Oswego during academic year 1974-1975 were surveyed to study the differences between them and their classmates who persisted. A sample of 52 students responded to questionnaires inquiring why they had chosen to attend Oswego, why they left early, and what their present educational plans or activities were. Characteristics of withdrawn students, showing major field of study, sex, class, grade point average (GPA), high school average, and responses to survey questions are tabulated. The results indicate that Oswego attracted substantial numbers of students who may not have intended to complete a bachelor's degree there. The average GPA of withdrawn students was 2.46, and female students left before graduation at a higher rate than male students. Only three in ten who withdrew expressed dissatisfaction with campus conditions as the main reason for leaving. Nearly eight out of every ten who left enrolled full-time at another college and 15 percent of those who left have returned to Oswego or intend to. It is suggested that from these findings the increased rate of withdrawal can be explained best by changes in the students. (BH)

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State University of New York

Office of Institutional Research

Research Report

A Follow-up Study of Students Who Withdrew from Oswego, 1974-75

By
Herbert Garber, Director

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U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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State University of New York

Office of Institutional Research

Research Report 10/6/77

A Follow-up Study of Students Who Withdrew from Oswego, 1974-75

by Herbert Garber, Director

I. Introduction

At the deans' meeting of June 4, 1975 a request was made to study differences in characteristics of the students who withdrew from Oswego and their classmates who persisted.

II. Findings

Some 749 full-time undergraduate students officially withdrew from Oswego during the past year. A sample (20%) was drawn for a follow-up mailed survey.

To make a review of the results more understandable, the findings are presented here in two parts.

A. First, basic data on the entire withdrawn population will describe the following characteristics (see Tables one and two for numerical presentation).

Characteristics of Total Withdrawn Students

TABLE ONE

1. Numbers from each major area who withdrew
2. Numbers enrolled in each major
3. Expected withdrawal rate in each major
4. Actual withdrawal rate

TABLE TWO

5. Sex, class, and G.P.A. of withdrawn students

B. Part two will present the answers to three questions which those students surveyed supplied.

III. Results

A. Characteristics of Withdrawn Students

TABLE ONE shows that industrial arts, elementary education, business administration, psychology, and biology in that order are the largest Oswego departments.

More than half (2949) the full-time students who had declared majors were enrolled in them.

The overall withdrawal rate from the College was about 10 percent. By indicating 10 percent of the enrollment in each major (column four) we have an expected number of withdrawn students if we can assume that students withdraw at a uniform rate from each major area of study.

Column four shows the actual number who withdrew and column six shows the ratio of actual to expected. Therefore, any values in column six greater or less than one (1.0) suggest higher or lower expected to actual rates, respectively, of withdrawing from college. We can see that of the five largest programs, three have greater than expected rates (bus. adm., psych. and biol.) while industrial arts and elementary education lose fewer than expected.

TABLE TWO shows that slightly more than one-half (51.5) the students who left early last year were female even though they were merely 46.1% of all full-time undergraduate students.

Students who leave to transfer elsewhere are ordinarily sophomores or beginning juniors. The table shows that at Oswego those two classes account for the bulk of those who withdraw (66%).

The overall grade point average (GPA) for the College in the fall of 1975 was 2.73. Those who withdrew last year had a mean GPA of 2.46. It is questionable procedure to average averages. Therefore, TABLE TWO shows also what percent of the withdrawn students had high school averages of 90.0 or better. Also, for comparison, the table shows that same excellent academic predictor for native members of three classes. It is fairly clear that large proportions of our "better" students are not leaving Oswego early.

B. Surveyed Student Responses

The withdrawn students whom we surveyed were asked to answer three questions:

1. Why did you choose Oswego?
2. Why did you leave early? and
3. What are your present educational plans or activities?

We received 52 responses. TABLE THREE displays the numbers and percents of the responses to each of the three questions. (We have another table showing

the responses in nested form which is rather difficult to read.)

Highlights from TABLE THREE are:

1. About two-thirds of these students seemed to intend to graduate from Oswego (Col. A, row one plus five = 67.3%).

2. About 27% left here because they found unsatisfying conditions (Col. B, rows two, three, five, and six). Keep in mind that we must multiply .27 times .10 (total withdrawing rate) to find how many LEFT because they were unhappy with this college (2.7%).

3. Three-fourths either will or have enrolled elsewhere and nearly 15% have returned to Oswego or will try to (Col. C, row one plus two and row six plus seven, respectively).

Answers four and five inquired about transfer to non-collegiate study and complete withdrawal from further formal education. No respondent indicated such actions.

IV. Conclusion

Oswego has attracted substantial numbers of students who may have not intended to take a bachelor's degree here. They came, instead, to transfer later, try themselves in college, or wanted a program which Oswego did not offer.

Programs which enroll large numbers of students vary in the degree to which students drop out of Oswego. The largest degree program lost the fewest students when compared to the four other largest major areas (I.A.).

The "quality" of student who withdraws is not preponderantly the so-called "better" student. The average GPA was 2.46 (2.22 for males, 2.54 for females). Also, only 10.6 percent of these students showed high promise of college success based on their high school grades.

Female students continue to leave before graduation at a higher rate than male students.

Only three in ten who withdrew expressed dissatisfaction with campus conditions as the main reason for leaving. Nearly eight in ten of the leavers enrolled full-time at another college or will soon. Nearly three in ten who left said they did so because they could not obtain their program at Oswego.

Fifteen percent of those who left have returned to Oswego or intend to.

These findings seem to suggest that the increased rate of withdrawing can be explained best by changes in the students. It seems reasonable that a college which focuses on preparing students to complete a four year degree program ought to expect a substantial number of withdrawing students from a subpopulation who entered as freshmen with only slight intentions of staying the full four years.

Programs which are unique in the region and well-established here even though they enroll large numbers seem to hold their students at Oswego rather well. On the other hand, those which compete with similar programs at other regional colleges and are relatively new to Oswego seem to require commitment to this College to a lesser degree.

TABLE 1

Characteristics of Withdrawn Students, 1974-75

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
Major	Enrll. Fall '74	% Majors of Total F. T.	Expected # W/D	Actual # W/D	% Attrition	Ratio Actual/ Expected
Amer. St.	24	.35	3	5	20.8	1.7
Anthro.	74	1.08	8	11	14.9	1.4
Art	208	3.05	22	39	18.8	1.8
Biology	408	5.98	44	52	12.7	1.2
Bus. Ad.	689	10.10	74	78	11.3	1.1
Chemistry	84	1.23	9	8	9.5	.9
Comm. St.	170	2.49	18	27	15.9	1.5
Comp. Sci.	219	3.21	23	12	5.5	.5
Economics	51	.74	5	6	11.8	1.2
Elem. Ed.	693	10.16	74	67	9.7	.9
English	194	2.84	21	18	9.3	.9
French	49	.72	5	5	10.2	1.0
Geography	25	.37	3	6	24.0	2.0
Geology	39	.57	4	4	10.3	1.0
German	24	.35	3	3	12.5	1.0
History	115	1.69	12	10	8.7	.8
Ind. Arts	721	10.57	77	62	8.6	.8
Ling.	18	.26	2	1	5.6	.5
Math.	153	2.24	16	14	9.2	.9
Meteor.	61	.89	7	4	6.6	.6
Music	51	.75	5	6	11.8	1.2
Philos.	18	.26	2	8	44.4	4.0
Phil./Psy.	17	.25	2	2	11.8	1.0
Physics	27	.39	3	2	7.4	.7
Pol. Sci.	193	2.83	21	21	10.9	1.0
Psychology	438	6.42	47	50	11.4	1.1
Pub. Just.	153	2.24	16	19	12.4	1.2
Russian	10	.15	1	3	30.0	3.0
Sec. Ed.	331	4.85	35	32	9.9	.9
Soc. Sci.	113	1.66	12	7	6.2	.6
Sociol.	207	3.03	22	22	10.6	1.0
Spanish	52	.76	6	2	3.8	.3
Speech	14	.21	1	1	7.1	1.0
Theatre	97	1.42	10	20	20.6	2.0
Zoology	67	.98	7	8	11.9	1.1
Undecided	996	14.60	106	95	9.5	.9
TOTAL	6823	100.30	726*	730	10.7	1.0
WITHOUT UNDECIDED	5827	85.4	620*	635	10.9	1.02

* Expected # W/D does not equal actual # W/D because of rounding errors.

TABLE 2

Sex, Class, GPA, and H.S. Average of Withdrawn Students, 1974-75

	Sex	Class		%	GPA W/D S's*		% With 3.00+	% with HS Ave. 90.0+	
M	363	FR	193	26.	TOT	2.46		W/D S's*	10.6
		SO	263	36.	M	2.22	22.0	FR	15.9
F	386	JR	217	30.	F	2.54		SO	13.4
		SR	59	8.	TOT. COLL.			JR	14.0
TOT	749				2.73				

* W/D S's = Withdrawn Students

TABLE 3

Responses to Mailed Survey

A Reason for Choosing Oswego			B Reason for Leaving Oswego			C Present Educ. Activity or Plans		
	No.	%		No.	%		No.	%
1.	15	28.8	1.	15	28.8	1.	31	59.6
2.	6	11.5	2.	5	9.6	2.	9	17.3
3.	5	9.6	3.	2	3.8	3.	4	7.7
4.	6	11.5	4.	1	1.9	6.	4	7.7
5.	20	38.5	5.	6	11.5	7.	4	7.7
			6.	1	1.9			
	52	99.9	7.	3	5.8		52	100.0
			8.	4	7.7			
			9.	15	28.8			
				52	99.8			

1. Wanted certain program	1. Transfer to place with my program	1. Enrolled full-time elsewhere
2. To try myself in college	2. Transfer for more challenge	2. Intend to enroll later
3. To transfer later	3. Work here too demanding	3. Attending or will, part-time
4. Had to go to coll.	4. Took job with a future	4.-5. (omit)
5. Heard good things about Oswego	5. Bad housing or environment	6. Returned to Oswego
	6. Bad teaching	7. Intend to return to Oswego
	7. Financial	
	8. Family obligations	
	9. Other	